On the (a)symmetry of FR-ANG-lais pronunciation feedback: a comparative analysis of corrective feedback provided by English-speaking and French-speaking participants during language tandem conversations

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Sylwia Scheuer, Céline Horgues
University of Sorbonne Nouvelle – Paris 3

Our French-English tandem interaction corpus (Horgues& Scheuer, 2015a) offers a new perspective on how L2 learners receive and use corrective feedback (CF) – especially pronunciation feedback – and also on how native speaking tandem participants, who are not professional language teachers, might serve as efficient CF providers. We video-recorded 21 French-English tandem pairs, each consisting of a native French and a native English student. The tandems were recorded in two sessions, separated by 3 months, each time performing collaborative reading and semi-spontaneous tasks (story-telling and debating) in both languages. The corpus is therefore well-suited for a comparative analysis of French and English NSs' strategies on CF in general, and pronunciation feedback in particular. Our methodology derives from the typology established in previous research into CF in the context of L2 classroom teaching (Lyster&Ranta, 1997; Sheen, 2006; Lyster, Sato & Sato, 2013), which we have adapted to the characteristics of peer-to-peer interactions.

We have previously reported on the CF provided by the native English participants (Horgues& Scheuer, 2015b), where, pronunciation-wise, the NSs predominantly recast segmental errors (66%), vowels being the prime target. In the present paper we proceed to a comparative study of the participants' corrective behaviour by examining the French portion of the data.Our main research questions are: Do French and English NSs target the same language areas while providing CF? Do they resort to the same corrective strategies (recast, clarification requests, explicit comments)? Do they display the same preferences as to the types of pronunciation errors triggering CF?

The analysis of the data from session 1 shows that French NSs provide over twice as much CF as their Anglophone counterparts (201 vs 93 corrective instances) and that they predominantly correct vocabulary and morphosyntax(42% and 22%, with a further 13.5% involving a combination of the two), with pronunciation being most rarely targeted (12%).English NSs even more strongly favour vocabulary (61%), with 'pure' morphosyntactic corrections ranking the lowest (12%).Recast remains by far the prevalent corrective strategy, employed in over 80% CF instances in the English and the French sections of the corpus alike. The pronunciation errors targeted by the French CF providers are almost exclusively segmental. While some of the above dissimilarities are inevitably due to structural differences between English and French, profound sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors may have to be invoked to explain other asymmetries.

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